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Congressional Record - ABM (No. 5) A Hold Fast on Missile Deployment

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

A HOLD-FAST ON MISSILE DEPLOYMENT

After several years of relative stability, the Soviet Union and the United States are on the verge of major additional deployments of nuclear missiles. The pressure to proceed with the installation of these new systems is on in this nation and the indications are that it is on in the Soviet Union. It is on despite the fact that each nation can ill-afford the enormous expenditures of these deployments in the light of other national needs. It is on even though, for years, both nations have urged arms limitations as the better way to national security than the continuance of this appalling missile merry-go-round.

It should be noted, therefore, that during the last months of the Johnson Administration and the first months of the present Administration the Soviet Union apparently made three overtures which suggested a willingness to sit down and discuss a limitation on armaments of various types. In a similar vein, President Nixon has stated that he wants to replace the era of "confrontation" with the era of negotiations." He has made clear that he would prefer the "open-hand" to the "closed fist" in the relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Based on Secretary Rogers' press conference of April 7, I assume that Soviet probings for talks on armaments have received full consideration in the Executive Branch. It would be my hope that the President, on that basis and on the basis of the preparations which he has made since taking office, would now be ready to set a date certain to open U. S.-Soviet discussions.

I am not suggesting that armaments negotiations should be "linked" with a consideration of political differences and the host of other issues

which have separated the United States and the Soviet Union for many years. Panoramic negotiations of that kind may or may not be fruitful at some point in the future. In my view, however, first things should come first.

The first thing, in my judgment, is not to be found in the political issues of many years standing. Nor is the first thing to be found in arms reduction in a general sense which has been under discussion for two decades. Rather, the most urgent need is to curb the rising pressure in both countries for another major intensification of the deadly nuclear weapons confrontation.

The time to respond to Soviet overtures for talks or to take the initiative ourselves should be before not after the deployment of new nuclear weapons systems, for which the gears are now turning, has gained irreversible momentum in both countries. What is needed before all else are U. S.-Soviet negotiations which, confined to one question, may act to halt these gears promptly. What is needed, now, in my judgment, is the negotiation of an agreement to hold-fast on the further deployment of nuclear weapons in the Soviet Union and the United States.

If agreement on that single point can be achieved there would be created a climate of calm, as in the case of the aftermath of the Test Ban Treaty, which might help to bring about solutions of mutual interest to the more complex problems of arms-reduction as well as the resolution of political differences. At the least, the immediate result of an agreement to hold-fast on further nuclear deployments would be an immense savings of resources which would otherwise be diverted into new weapons systems in both countries over the next few years. Any initiative by the President in this connection, in my judgment, would be gratefully received, not only by the peoples concerned but by the peoples of the world.

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retary of Defense, Mr. Laird, for not appearing before the Republican National Committee today to discuss the question of the ABM.

I wish to express my concern about reports I have read in the newspapers to the effect that the Democratic National Committee has indicated that the question of the ABM might become a partisan issue.

I also want to express my concern about Republican attempts to make it a partisan issue on the basis of pressures which I understand—but cannot prove—have been in operation during the past several days.

Furthermore, I also wish to express my concern about any Democrat in this Chamber who attempts to make the ABM a partisan political issue.

I am also concerned with committees being set up either for or against the ABM and being allied with either party. I think they should go their own way, make their own case. The Senate will make up its own mind, either for or against.

I commend the President, if a report which I have heard is accurate on the statement, attributed to the White House, that he contemplates appearing before the Nation in defense of his proposal for a Safeguard missile system. That is within the area of his responsibility—make his case, so to speak. But the point I emphasize above all else is that this is not a Republican issue or a Democratic issue. It is a national issue which supersedes the interests of both parties. It is an issue which has two sides. There are meritorious arguments on both—let them be heard in the Senate.

In recent years many issues of foreign relations and military policy have come before the Senate. That these questions have been considered in an atmosphere free of partisan political consideration reflects great credit on Senators of both parties.

I have no hesitancy in this connection in acknowledging a debt to the distinguished minority leader (Mr. DIRKSEN) and to the entire Republican membership. During the Kennedy and the Johnson administrations, there was no inclination on their part to play politics with the Nation's security. Equally, there will be no inclination on the part of the majority leadership to play politics with these issues during the current administration.

That is not to say that there will not be differences. There are already differences even as there were differences during the past two administrations. The differences, however, will cut across party lines, now, even as they did then. That is to be expected when complex questions confront the Senate. That is as it should be when these questions are examined in the context of the variety of insights and attitudes which exist in the Senate.

The treatment of Vietnam during the last administration illustrates this point. The Senate will recall that policies of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations on Vietnam were disputed, in the first instance, by Democratic Senators, by members of the Democratic majority. My own views of disagreement with these

policies are well known because they were expressed publicly and, in private, to both President Kennedy and President Johnson. Clearly, there was no element of politics involved in Democratic Senators assuming positions of opposition to a Democratic administration.

Distinguished Republican Senators, however, also formed a most articulate and perceptive segment of the opposition to the spread of the Vietnamese violence during the previous administration. To be sure, the opposition of these Republican Senators was directed at a Democratic administration. They acted, however, not out of partisanship but on the basis of their high constitutional responsibilities. In my judgment, those Republican Senators deserve not partisan labels but national thanks for their contribution to preventing the compounding of the tragic conflict in Vietnam.

In the same fashion, the critical examination of the ABM issue has also transcended party lines. The opposition to this immensely costly and questionable military undertaking did not begin on January 20 with a Republican administration. Rather, the opposition had already reached significant expression—perhaps over 40 percent of the Senate—in the last session of the Congress.

There were Democratic Senators, then, who voted their convictions that the Department of Defense was moving into dubious grounds with the ABM proposal. There were Democrats, then, who felt and so stated—the distinguished Senator from Missouri (Mr. SYMINGTON), for example—that we would risk enormous tax funds for what, at the very best, would prove an unnecessary piling up of useless military hardware.

In this instance, too, as in the case of Vietnam, voices of opposition were raised on the Republican side of the aisle. Indeed, the initiative which served to marshal the opposition to the ABM came largely from the perceptive and articulate arguments of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. COOPER).

Why did this distinguished Republican speak out? Did he speak as a Republican to embarrass a Democratic administration? Or did he speak as a Senator of conscience and conviction? Did the Senator from Kentucky speak as a partisan politician or as a former diplomat with an immense knowledge of world affairs? And did the distinguished Senator from Maine (Mrs. SMITH), the ranking member of the minority of the Armed Services Committee, in opposing this project last year, speak as a partisan politician? Or did she speak as one of the Senate's ablest experts in military matters, with a far longer experience in the problems of nuclear weaponry than most of the Defense Department officials who were urging the ABM?

I need not labor the point. I make the point only to underscore the total absence of partisanship, heretofore, in the consideration of the issue of the ABM. I make it only because of disturbing reports of outside efforts to synthesize a political partisanship where, in fact, none has existed and where none should exist.

We were, none of us, born yesterday. We are, none of us, strangers to the more

THE ANTI-BALLISTIC-MISSILE SYSTEM

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I wish to commend the distinguished Sec-

devious byways of the world of politics. But the attempt to bring political considerations into this issue by the backdoor of the Senate is not trivial and it is most inexcusable.

What is at stake, here, is not the political popularity of this administration anymore than its predecessor. What is at stake here, in the end, are billions of dollars of funds—expenditures which have been proposed by the Defense Department under consecutive administrations. These are public funds which we can ill afford to waste on superfluous impractical or irrelevant defenses at a time when inflation and taxes and urgent civil demands are pressing heavily upon the people of the United States.

What is sounding in the ABM question is not the clarion call to politics in 1970 or 1972. It is, rather, the call to face clearly in the Senate the issues of peace and war—to consider deeply what may contribute to the strengthening of peace and what may intensify the prospect of war.

That is what confronts us. I do not know how the Senate will decide this issue. I am confident, however, that Senators of both parties will dismiss from the consideration of the issue this patent attempt to intrude an extraneous politics into the constitutional responsibility which devolves upon each Senator regardless of his views.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. MANSFIELD. I yield, if I have time remaining.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed for 5 minutes.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Without objection, the Senator from Kentucky is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. President, I thank Senator MANSFIELD for his very generous remarks. But I must say that the effort in the Senate to bring before the Congress and the country the merits of the proposed ABM system has been led and shared by many on both sides of the aisle, and certainly the leadership and moral force of the majority leader has been in my view a most important factor.

I share his viewpoint that the ABM issue should be removed from the arena of partisan politics, as far as it is possible. I say—as far as possible—because of public interest in issues and in political personalities make it impossible that a debate such as this will be carried on wholly apart from political consideration. And beyond the partisan politics, the Executive, as well as Members of the Congress who oppose and support this system, has the right and the duty to the country to call for support.

But I would caution the national committees and political organizations, whether of the Republican or Democratic Party, not to appeal for support or opposition to the system because of party or support of individuals. As Members of the Congress deeply concerned about this issue which affects our country seek to make their decision, partisan efforts do not help and in my judgment will backfire.

This debate involves the question of national security, which no responsible person of either party would want to compromise. Beyond the question of whether deployment against some sudden or immediate danger which in my view has not been satisfied, is the larger issue of determining the elements of security in a world of nuclear weapons, and the question of deployment concerns its effect on negotiations with the Soviet Union on control of nuclear weapons, for which the President is striving. The question of whether such arrangements are possible is always a doubtful one, but the very nature of our system of government demands always that we make the effort. A sensible ground upon which we can expect an opportunity to reach such an accord is that our interests in this case are mutual. The Soviets are unpredictable, but like the United States we cannot consider that they want to be destroyed.

We must consider the effect of the continued escalation of defensive and offensive nuclear weapons. Will their continued development cause the balance of terror to become an imbalance of terror with increased danger that one nation may try a preemptive strike? This condition would create a sense of fear, and certainly a sense of futility, particularly among the young people of our country who would like to live their lives in a peaceful world, at least relatively peaceful, and one not overhung by the threat of a nuclear race and a nuclear war. I do not suppose that any of us, young or old, want a nuclear weapons system hanging over us—and to live in mind if not in fact, like our ancient ancestors in caves. It may be there is no other way, but I am constrained to believe that reason can prevail.

When Senator HART, of Michigan, and I introduced an amendment last year to postpone the deployment of the ABM system, joined by Members of the Senate, both Republicans and Democrats, we did so that the Senate, the Congress, and the country would have the chance to fully examine its merits and the necessity of its deployment. Throughout last year as Senator HART and I persisted in the submission of amendments, joined always by a bipartisan group and as others introduced amendments—Senator YOUNG of Ohio, Senator NELSON of Wisconsin, Senator CLARK of Pennsylvania—continuing debate had the effect we had desired—submission of the issue on its merits to the country.

The debate has brought forward many versions of the purpose of the system—whether against a Chinese or Soviet threat, whether to protect our missile sites, whether for a mixed population and missile site protection, or whether to strengthen the hand of our country in negotiations with the Soviet Union. Each of these purposes has been questioned at times both by proponents and opponents.

But the debate has been upon the merits and not upon partisan grounds. The elected leadership of both the majority and the minority and other Members of the Senate have taken their positions on the merits and some are opponents and some are proponents of the system.

I hope this is the way it will continue and that the decision in the Congress will be made upon the merits. I continue to hope that the President will establish a committee such as Dr. Killian recommended, which working with the executive branch will provide the best judgment of the best informed minds of our country upon the issue, and that a judgment will result which would have the support of the great majority, perhaps an overwhelming majority, of our people.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. EAGLETON in the chair). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MISSILE DEPLOYMENT

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, as long as no Senator seems to be endeavoring to get recognition at this time, I should like to read a statement which I made on Saturday, so that it will be a part of the record of my position on the ABM:

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It should be noted, therefore, that during the last months of the Johnson Administration and the first months of the present Administration the Soviet Union apparently made three overtures which suggested a willingness to sit down and discuss a limitation on armaments of various types. In a similar vein, President Nixon has stated that he wants to replace the era of "confrontation" with the era of "negotiations." He has made clear that he would prefer the "open-hand" to the "closed fist" in the relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Based on Secretary Rogers' press conference of April 7, I assume that Soviet probings for talks on armaments have received full consideration in the Executive Branch.

I quote from that press conference, at which time Secretary of State Rogers was asked whether there was anything standing in the way of the strategic arms limitation talks. He gave this answer: "No, there is nothing that stands in the way and they can go forward very soon. We are in the process of preparing for them now and we expect they will begin in the late spring or early summer."

It would be my hope that the President, on that basis and on the basis of the preparations which he has made since taking office, would now be ready to set a date certain to open U.S.-Soviet discussions.

I am not suggesting that armaments negotiations should be "linked" with a considera-

tion of political differences and the host of other issues which have separated the United States and the Soviet Union for many years. Panoramic negotiations of that kind may or may not be fruitful at some point in the future. In my view, however, first things should come first.

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